

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WARSAW 09293 221624Z
ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: PINT, PL
SUBJ: CHRISTMAS 1977 FOOD SUPPLIES IN POLAND: WORSE THAN LAST YEAR?

1. THE SUPPLY OF FOOD, ESPECIALLY OF MEAT, USUALLY IMPROVES WHEN THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS APPROACH, AS THE GOVERNMENT RELEASES SUPPLIES HELD IN RESERVE FOR THE OCCASION. FOR MONTHS MEAT HAS BEEN SCARCE, COFFEE PRACTICALLY UNAVAILABLE, AND CITRUS FRUITES ON THE MARKET AT BEST SPORADICALLY. THE SUPPLY OF THESE SCARCE ITEMS HAS BRIGHTENED SOMEWHAT WITHIN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, BUT THE LINES ARE NO SHORTER AS PEOPLE SEARCH FOR A GOOD PIECE OF MEAT FOR THE HOLIDAY TABLE.

2. IN WARSAW PEOPLE QUEUE UP HOURS BEFORE MEAT STORES OPEN. CHRISTMAS DELIVERIES OF MEAT BEGAN TO APPEAR ON THE MARKET TWO WEEKS AGO, BUT IN QUANTITIES THAT SEEM INSUFFICIENT TO MEET DEMAND. SOME STORES STILL DISPLAY ONLY THE SAUSAGE WHICH HAS PROVIDED THE STAPLE OF THE AVERAGE PERSON'S MEAT DIET THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE YEAR, BUT KEEP PRIZED HAMS IN BACK ROOMS FOR THE LUCKY ONES WHO MAKE IT TO THE HEAD OF THE LINE -- OR HAVE

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CONNECTIONS. CARP, A TRADITIONAL HOLIDAY FAVORITE, HAS BEEN AVAILABLE FOR TWO WEEKS TO THOSE WITH PATIENCE. GRAPEFRUIT AND ORANGES RETURNED TO THE MARKET LAST WEEK IN LIMITED QUANTITIES AND AT HIGH PRICES. A GRAPEFRUIT PRICED AS 45 ZLOTYS, FOR EXAMPLE, REPRESENTS TWO HOURS OF WORK FOR THE PERSON WITH AN AVERAGE SALARY. AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF UNAVAILABILITY, COFFEE SEEMS TO HAVE RETURNED/.

FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, TO THE ZLOTY MARKET.

3. OUR CONSULATE IN POZNAN REPORTS THAT THE SITUATION THERE IS SIMILAR TO THAT IN WARSAW. MEAT, FRUIT, AND COFFEE HAVE APPEARED ON THE MARKET, BUT AGAIN IN QUANTITIES THAT FAIL TO SATISFY DEMAND AND TO FORESTALL LONG LINES.

4. PROVINCIAL CITIES ARE USUALLY FAR DOWN ON THE FOOD-DISTRIBUTION CHAIN, CZESTOCHOWA, FOR EXAMPLE, VISITED DECEMBER 21 BY AN EMBASSY OFFICER, IS NOTICEABLY WORSE OFF THAN WARSAW. CZESTOCHOWA RECEIVED ITS CHRISTMAS SUPPLIES IN EARLY DECEMBER IN QUANTITIES PROPORTIONALLY SMALLER TO THOSE MADE AVAILABLE IN WARSAW. THOSE SUPPLIES ARE ALMOST EXHAUSTED NOW.

5. COMMENT: MANY POLES WITH WHOM WE HAVE RECENTLY DISCUSSED THE SITUATION THINK THE SUPPLY OF FOODSTUFFS IS WORSE THIS CHRISTMAS THAN LAST. THE MOOD IN THE LINES SEEMS TO BE GROWING MORE SURLY. SHOULD THIS TREND CONTINUE, IT COULD POSE STILL ANOTHER SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE GOVERNMENT. END COMMENT.
DAVIES

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